



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

**AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
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Paramedics in homes a ‘bandaid solution’

AMA(SA) President Dr Peter Ford today voiced the AMA(SA)’s clear opposition to the introduction of a program to enable paramedics to provide advanced treatments to patients at home, describing the rationale for the program as ‘flawed’ and labelling this ‘latest doctor-substitution effort’ as a ‘bandaid solution’.

‘The AMA(SA) does not support using paramedics to provide extended care in residential settings,’ said Dr Ford.

‘Further, it is a slap in the face to the medical profession to say that paramedics are ‘leading the way’ in doing this. Extended Care Paramedics – no matter how good the extra training – are not doctors.

‘Encouraged by governments, we currently see allied health professions – nurses, pharmacists, physician assistants and others – being put forward as a substitute for doctors.

‘But when patients are sick, they want to see a doctor. And they deserve to see a doctor.’

‘If the community wants people to ‘doctor’, then we should get on and train enough doctors – rather than substituting doctors with other kinds of health workers.

‘We have many new medical students in medical schools – students who need to be mentored and trained to become fully fledged doctors. The last thing we need is resources and energies being diverted from this task into training up other allied health workers to do a doctor’s job.

‘The AMA(SA) has a number of genuine concerns with the paramedic proposal.

‘Extended Care Paramedics do not have the observational capacity to assess patients as a doctor would, nor do they have the skills or training necessary to diagnose and deal with the multiplicity of complex problems many elderly patients have.

‘And we are really troubled about the prospect of paramedics administering a ‘wide range of drugs’.

Dr Ford said the AMA(SA) was also concerned about the lack of access to a patient’s medical history and clinical notes in any consultation, the proper documentation of the consultation, and the lack of continuity of care.

'The AMA(SA) can also foresee problems in how the patient interaction is then reported to the patient's general practitioner.

'Paramedics do not have the same professional code of ethics or indemnity cover as the medical profession. And the prospect of paramedics conducting intimate examinations one-on-one in the home is another minefield.

'All in all, quality and safety are best preserved for patients when we leave it up to doctors to do the doctoring' concluded Dr Ford.

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